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(54) **FORCE FEEDBACK TRIGGERS**

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See application file for complete search history.

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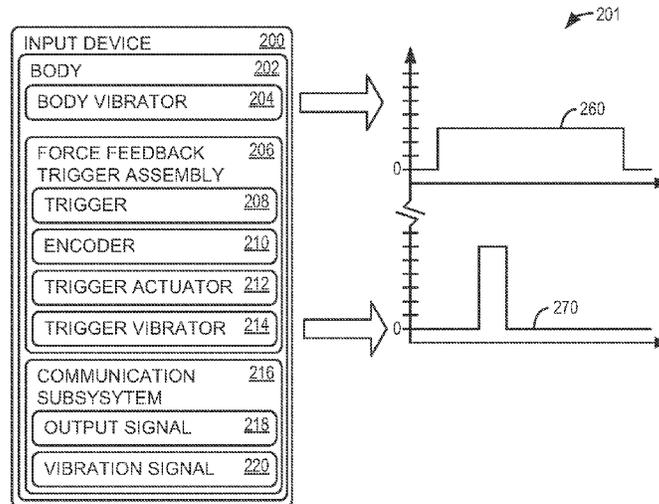
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A force feedback trigger includes an input device comprising a communication subsystem configured to provide bidirectional communication with a computing device. The input device further comprises a force feedback trigger assembly including a user-actuatable trigger configured to pivot about a trigger axis responsive to an applied external force. The input device further comprises a trigger vibrator directly coupled to the force feedback trigger assembly and communicatively coupled to the communication subsystem, the trigger vibrator configured to vibrate the user-actuatable trigger responsive to a vibration signal received from the computing device via the communication subsystem.

22 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets



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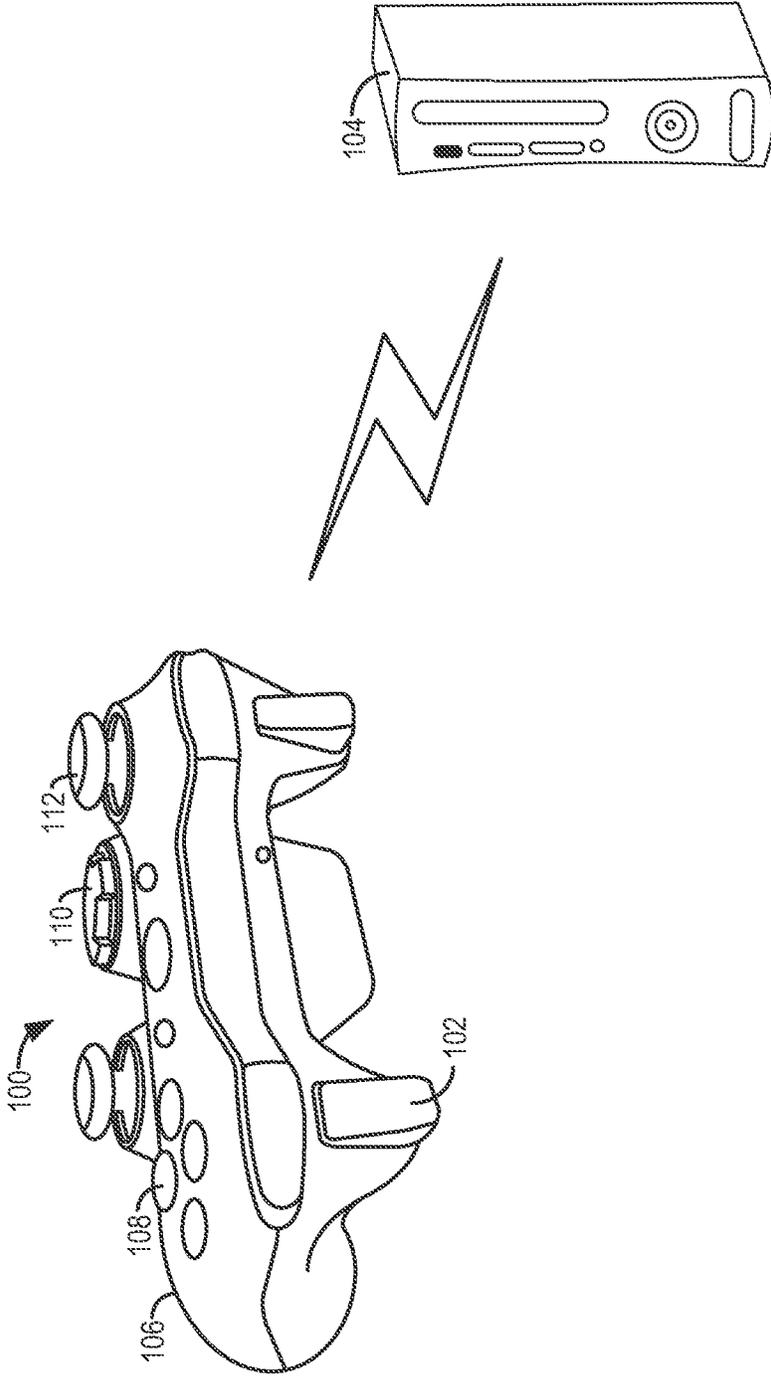


FIG. 1

FIG. 2

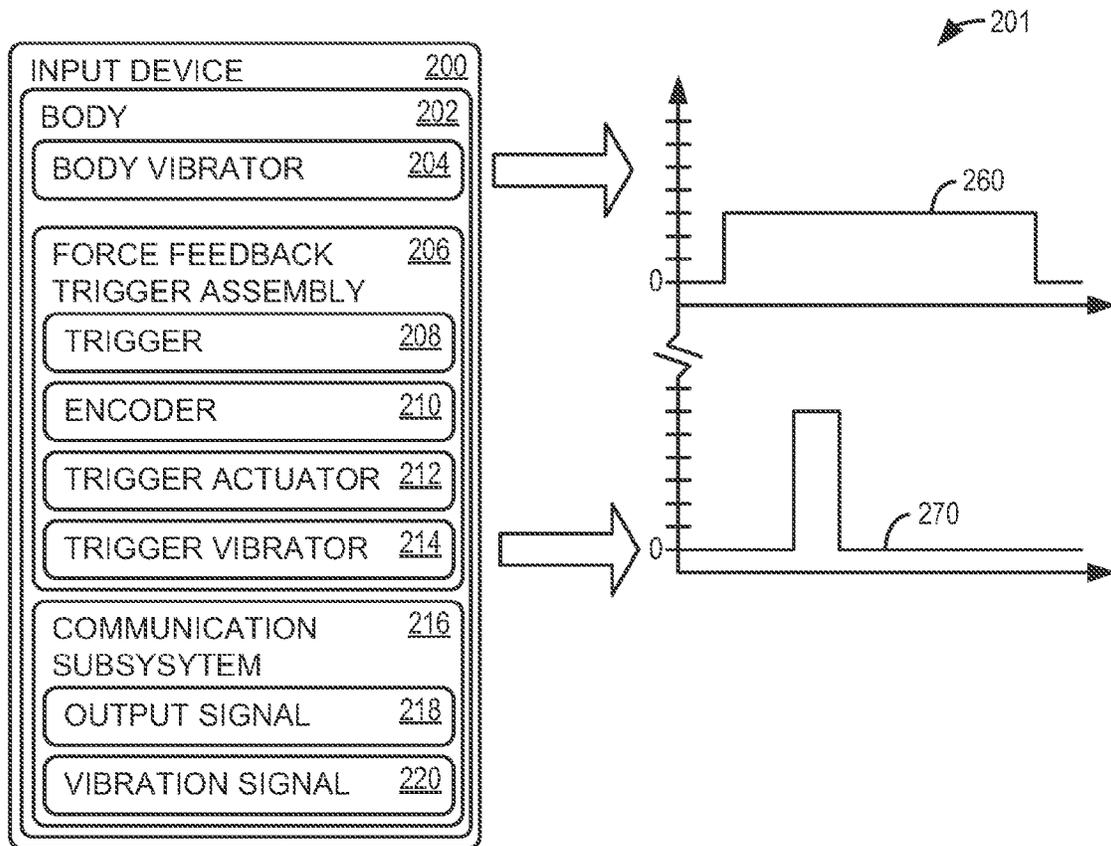


FIG. 3A

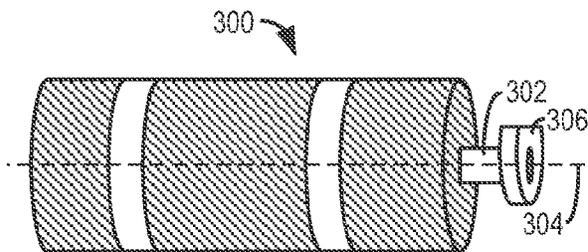


FIG. 3B

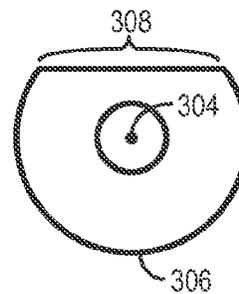


FIG. 4A

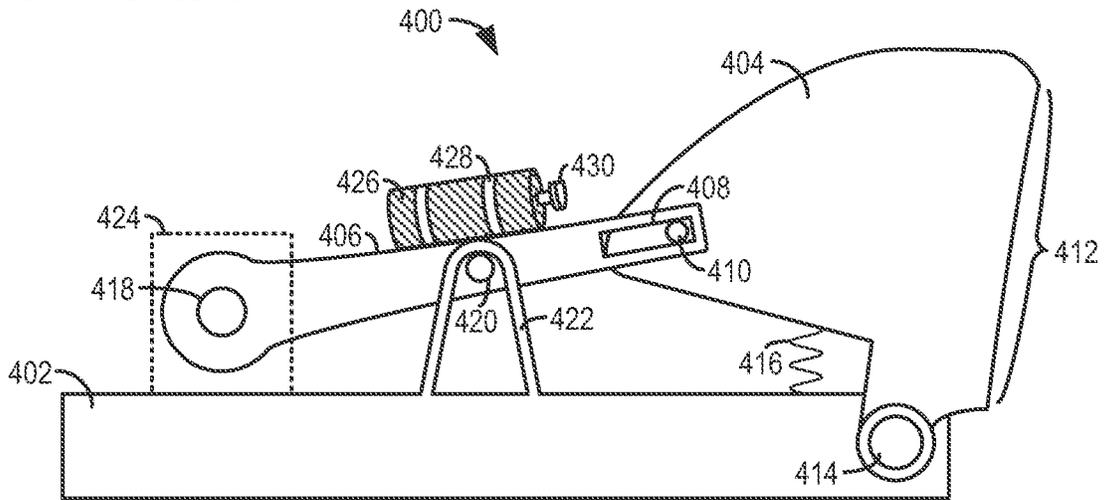


FIG. 4B

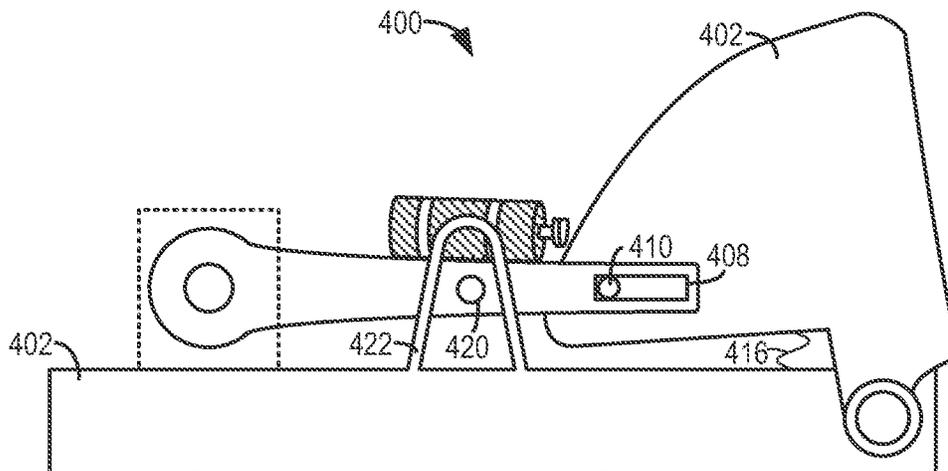


FIG. 5A

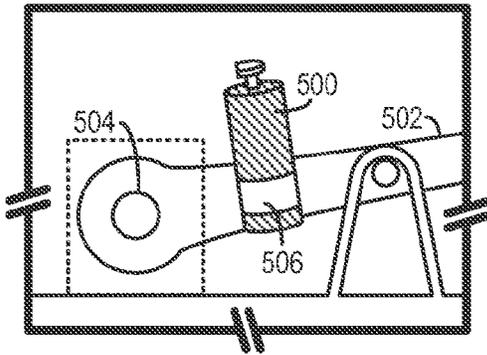


FIG. 5D

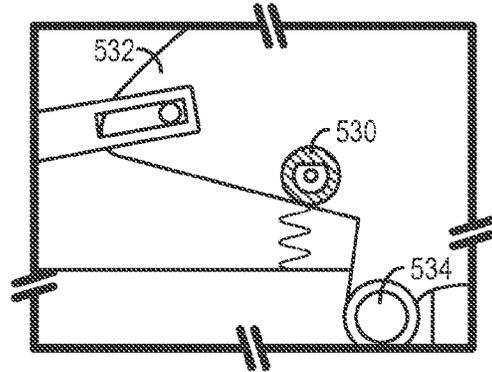


FIG. 5B

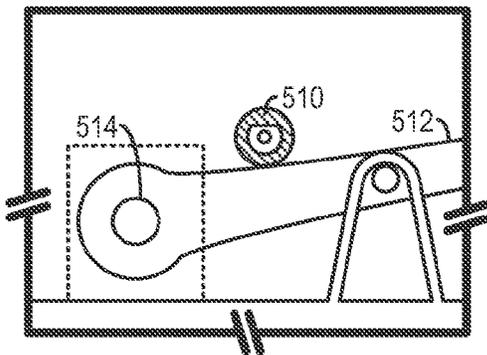


FIG. 5E

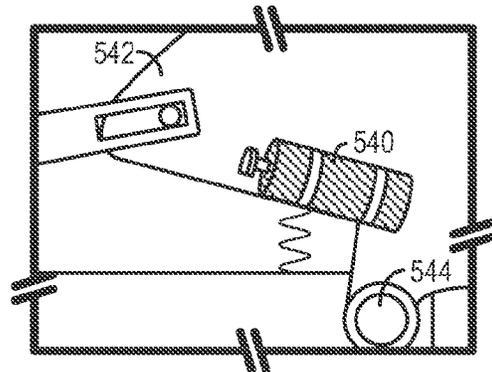


FIG. 5C

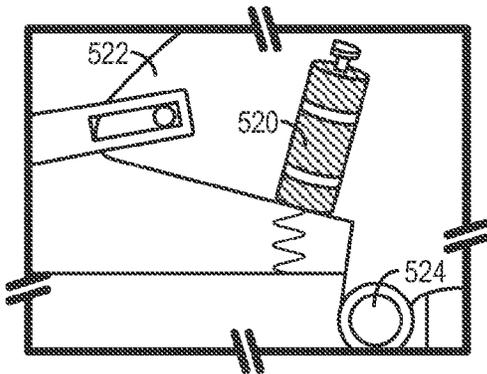
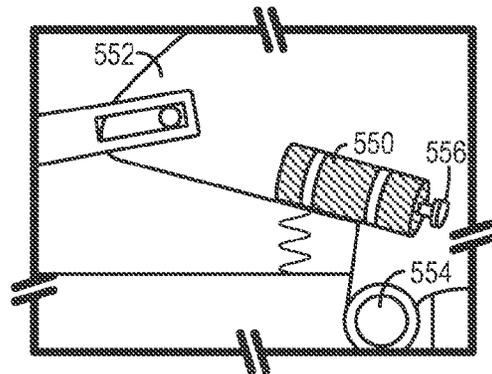


FIG. 5F



FORCE FEEDBACK TRIGGERS

BACKGROUND

Gaming controllers often include one or more vibrators. However, such gaming controllers often do not provide a satisfying gaming experience because the vibrators do not provide the user with realistic feedback.

SUMMARY

Embodiments are disclosed that relate to force feedback triggers. One disclosed embodiment includes an input device comprising a communication subsystem configured to provide bidirectional communication with a computing device. The input device further comprises a force feedback trigger assembly including a user-actuatable trigger configured to pivot about a trigger axis responsive to an applied external force. The input device further comprises a trigger vibrator directly coupled to the force feedback trigger assembly and communicatively coupled to the communication subsystem, the trigger vibrator configured to vibrate the user-actuatable trigger responsive to a vibration signal received from the computing device via the communication subsystem.

This Summary is provided to introduce a selection of concepts in a simplified form that are further described below in the Detailed Description. This Summary is not intended to identify key features or essential features of the claimed subject matter, nor is it intended to be used to limit the scope of the claimed subject matter. Furthermore, the claimed subject matter is not limited to implementations that solve any or all disadvantages noted in any part of this disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 shows a non-limiting example of an input device in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

FIG. 2 schematically shows a non-limiting input device and a visual representation of example vibration signals in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

FIG. 3A shows a side-view of a non-limiting example of a rotary motor configured to vibrate.

FIG. 3B shows a front-view of an eccentric mass of the rotary motor of FIG. 3A.

FIG. 4A shows a non-limiting example of a force feedback trigger assembly in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

FIG. 4B shows the assembly of FIG. 4A at an end position.

FIGS. 5A-F show various attachments of the trigger vibrator of FIG. 4A.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present disclosure is directed to a computing system input device including a force feedback trigger assembly configured to vibrate a user-actuatable trigger responsive to a vibration signal received from a computing device. Input devices, such as game controllers, may often include one or more vibrators configured to vibrate the entire game controller body such that the vibration is felt in the palm of the hand(s) supporting the controller. However, such vibration may not apply distinctive feeling to the user's finger(s) (e.g., index finger).

In contrast, a force feedback trigger assembly, when used in conjunction with a gaming device, may provide a more realistic gaming experience. For example, in a first-person shooting game, a force feedback trigger assembly may pro-

vide a feel to the user through the user's finger(s) approximating the feel of the trigger assembly on a real or fantasy weapon. The timing, duration, and amplitude of the vibration pulse may be synchronized to game play events. For example, the vibration pulse may be synchronized with the user seeing and hearing a gun recoil event. This pulse may also be repeated in quick succession to mimic a multi-shot weapon, or may be pulsed during release of a fantasy style weapon that recoils during trigger release.

FIG. 1 shows a non-limiting example of an input device **100** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. Input device **100** includes trigger **102**. Triggers, as discussed in the entirety of this application, refer to any user-actuatable input mechanism. Input device **100** further includes a communication subsystem configured to provide bidirectional communication with computing device **104**. Input device **100** may be configured to send control information to computing device **104** for controlling the computing device. Input device **100** may be further configured to receive from computing device **104** one or more vibration signals configured to effect vibration of the controller body and/or the trigger. Vibration signals will be discussed in more detail below.

The input device may communicate with computing device **104** via a wireless connection, a wired connection, or a combination thereof. For example, the wireless communication may be performed via infrared light, visible light, radio-frequency (e.g., 802.11 or mobile telephony), or a combination thereof. The communication may be accomplished via any combination of encodings, carrier frequencies, and protocols, both open and proprietary. Input device **100** may be used, for example, to control the motion of a game character rendered by computing device **104** and displayed via a display device.

Input device **100** includes a hollow body **106** configured to be held in one or both hands. It will be understood that body **106** is "hollow" in that body **106** forms one or more cavities in which other elements of input device **100**, in whole or in part, are oriented. Body **106** is further configured to provide support and/or positioning for trigger **102** and other input mechanisms (e.g., buttons **108**, directional pad **110**, and joystick **112**). Body **106** may comprise a plurality of individual pieces mechanically coupled to form body **106**. For example, individual pieces may be coupled using adhesive, screws, pressure fittings (e.g., snap-together), or a combination thereof. It will be understood that these scenarios are presented for the purpose of example, and are not intended to be limiting in any manner.

Trigger **102** may be configured to be actuated by one or more fingers (e.g., an index finger). In other embodiments, trigger **102** may be configured to be actuated by other mechanisms. It will be understood that trigger **102** and/or input mechanisms **108**, **110**, and **112** may be arranged within or upon body **106** of input device **100** in any suitable configuration. For example, although trigger **102** is illustrated on the rear of input device **100**, in some embodiments trigger **102** may be arranged on the top of input device **100**.

FIG. 2 schematically shows a non-limiting input device **200** and a visual representation **201** of example vibration signals in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. Input device **200** includes a body **202** (e.g., body **106** of FIG. 1). Body **202** may be mechanically coupled to body vibrator **204** and force feedback trigger assembly **206**. Body vibrator may include one or more discrete vibrators configured to provide vibration to body **202**, and thus to the palm(s) of the user of input device **200**.

Force feedback trigger assembly **206** is configured to receive user input and to provide force feedback to the user. In order to receive user input, assembly **206** includes a trigger **208** (e.g., trigger **102** of FIG. 1). Trigger **208** is configured to rotate about an axis or otherwise move under an applied external force (e.g., via a user's index finger). One or more pull parameters (e.g., displacement, velocity, acceleration, angle, absolute position) of said movement may be translated via one or more encoders **210** into one or more electrical signals. Example encoders **210** include, but are not limited to, mechanical sensors (e.g., limit switch), optical sensors (e.g., optical encoder or optical break sensor), magnetic sensors (e.g., magnetic reed switch), capacitive sensors, or a combination thereof. Said electrical signal may be either digital or analog.

In some embodiments, encoders **210** may be directly coupled to trigger **208**. In other embodiments, assembly **206** may further include trigger actuator **212** to which encoder **210** is coupled. Trigger actuator **212** may be one or more mechanisms mechanically coupled to trigger **208** and encoder **210**. Actuator **212** may be configured to translate motion of trigger **208** into motion recognized by encoders **210**.

Assembly **206** further includes trigger vibrator **214**. Trigger vibrator **214** is mechanically coupled to one or more elements of assembly **206**. As such, vibrator **214** is configured to effect vibration of trigger **208**, and thus provides force feedback to the user. Vibrator **214** may be any device, or combination of devices, capable of effecting vibration in response to one or more electrical signals.

Input device **200** further includes communication subsystem **216** configured to provide bidirectional communication between input device **200** and a computing device (e.g., computing device **104** of FIG. 1). It will be understood that in some embodiments, communication subsystem **216** may be configured to provide unidirectional communication from input device **200** to the computing device. Communication subsystem **216** may be configured to provide an output signal **218** for controlling the computing device. Communication subsystem **216** may be further configured to receive, from the computing device, one or more vibration signals **220** configured to effect vibration of body **202** and/or trigger **208**.

FIG. 2 also shows a visual representation **201** of example vibration signals provided to body vibrator **204** and to trigger vibrator **214**. Specifically, representation **201** shows the amplitude (e.g., voltage) of signals **260** and **270** versus time. Signals **260** and **270** are provided to body vibrator **204** and trigger vibrator **214** respectively. It will be understood that signals **260** and **270** are depicted on the same axes.

As shown, signal **260** is of smaller amplitude and longer duration than signal **270**. As such, signal **260** may effect a lower-intensity vibration over a longer period of time (e.g., "rumble"), whereas signal **270** may effect a higher-intensity vibration of a shorter period of time. Although signal **260** is illustrated as occurring before signal **270**, it will be understood that signals **260** and **270** may be temporally oriented in any manner. As mentioned above, signal **270** may be pulsed, such as to mimic recoil of a firing weapon. It will be understood that signals **260** and **270** are presented for the purpose of example, and are not meant to be limiting in any way. Instead, signals **260** and **270** are provided to illustrate an example relative amplitude and duration of signals provided to body vibrator **204** and to trigger vibrator **214**.

As mentioned, body vibrator **204** and trigger vibrator **214** may be any device, or combination of devices, configured to vibrate. FIG. 3A shows a side-view of a non-limiting example of a rotary motor **300** configured to vibrate. Motor **300**, in

response to one or more applied electrical signals, is configured to rotate shaft **302** about motor axis **304**. In some embodiments, motor **300** may be configured to only spin in one direction. In other embodiments, motor **300** may be configured to spin in both directions. Motor **300** further includes eccentric mass (sometimes referred to as an "offset weight") **306** coupled to shaft **302**. Mass **306** may be any mass with a center-of-mass displaced from axis **304**. As such, the rotation of mass **306** about axis **304** vibrates motor **300** and any mechanism coupled thereto. Although motor **300** is illustrated as being substantially cylindrical (and thus substantially radially symmetric about axis **304**), it will be understood that motor **300** may be of any suitable shape.

FIG. 3B shows a front-view of an eccentric mass **306** of FIG. 3A. Mass **306** includes profile **308** to define the eccentricity of mass **306**. While mass **306** is illustrated as being substantially circular with a single profile **308**, it will be understood that mass **306** may be of any suitable shape with any number of suitable profiles **308**, such that mass **306** is eccentric about axis **304** (illustrated as a point). For example, in some embodiments, mass **306** may be rectangular.

FIG. 4A shows a non-limiting example of a force feedback trigger assembly **400** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. Assembly **400** includes support structure **402** configured to support or otherwise interact with one or more elements of assembly **400**. While illustrated as a single structure, it will be understood that structure **402** may include a plurality of individual structures. In some embodiments, structure **402** may be incorporated into and/or coupled to the body of the input device (e.g., body **106** of FIG. 1 or body **202** of FIG. 2).

Assembly **400** further includes a trigger **404** at a rest position. It will be understood that the term "rest position" as used herein refers to the position of the trigger assembly absent an applied external force. Trigger **404** is mechanically coupled to trigger actuator **406**. Trigger actuator **406** includes a guide **408** in which a follower **410** of trigger **404** is configured to move. In other embodiments, trigger **404** may include a guide (e.g., guide **408**), and a follower (e.g., follower **410**) may be coupled to trigger actuator **406**. While illustrated as a substantially linear guide, it will be understood that guide **408** may be of any suitable shape. For example, in some embodiments, the guide may be arc-shaped. In some embodiments, trigger **404** may be coupled to trigger actuator **406** in another suitable manner. For example, trigger actuator **406** may include a "fixed" notch into which a pivot may be inserted.

As force is applied to edge **412** of trigger **404** (e.g., via an index finger), trigger **404** is configured to rotate about trigger axis **414**. As trigger **404** rotates about axis **414**, trigger **404** interacts with trigger spring **416**. Specifically, trigger spring **416** resists pivoting of trigger **404** about axis **414** throughout the entire range of motion of trigger **404**. In some embodiments, spring **416** may include more than one spring operating in parallel and/or series. Trigger spring **416** may be coupled to trigger **404** and to structure **402** in any suitable manner. For example, spring **416** may be attached to trigger **404** and/or structure **402** with adhesive. In other embodiments, spring **416** may be configured to partially extend over a tab of trigger **404** and/or a tab of structure **402**. It will be understood that such scenarios are provided for the purpose of example and are not meant to be limiting in any manner.

Furthermore, as trigger **404** rotates, follower **410** moves within guide **408**, thus causing trigger actuator **406** to rotate about actuator axis **418**. The motion of actuator **406**, and thus of trigger **404**, may be restricted at one or both limits by the interaction between tab **420** coupled to actuator **406** and

guide **422** coupled to structure **402**. For example, as illustrated, said interaction may define the limiting “rest position” of assembly **400**.

In some embodiments, trigger actuator **406** may be configured to move in a manner other than rotation. For example, trigger actuator **406** may be configured to translate the rotation of trigger **404** into substantially linear motion. As discussed above in reference to FIG. 2, one or more characteristics of the movement of trigger actuator **406** may be translated into one or more representative electrical signals via any suitable mechanism. For example, trigger actuator **406** may be coupled to the shaft of potentiometer **424**. As such, the potentiometer may be configured to translate the rotation of trigger actuator **406** into electrical resistance.

Assembly **400** further includes trigger vibrator **426** (e.g., motor **300** of FIG. 3A) mechanically coupled to trigger actuator **406** via one or more mountings **428**. In other embodiments, as discussed below in reference to FIGS. 5A-E, vibrator **426** may be coupled to the same or different element(s) of assembly **400** in the same or a different orientation. Although mountings **428** are illustrated as two “straps” around vibrator **426**, it will be understood that vibrator **426** may be coupled to trigger actuator **406** via any suitable mechanism. For example, in some embodiments, vibrator **426** and actuator **406** may include complementary features such that one feature is configured to interact with the other (e.g., slide into, snap into, etc.). In other embodiments, vibrator **426** may be coupled to actuator **406** via adhesive.

Vibrator **426** is configured to rotate eccentric mass **430** about a motor axis (e.g., motor axis **304** of FIG. 3A). During rotation, the eccentricity of mass **430** effects vibration of motor **300**. As motor **300** is coupled to trigger actuator **406**, which in turn is coupled to trigger **404**, vibration is therefore also effected in trigger **404**. Although vibrator **426** is illustrated as a rotary motor, it will be understood that vibrator **426** may include any device, or combination of devices, configured to vibrate. For example, in some embodiments, vibrator **426** may include a piezoelectric vibrator.

In order to attenuate said vibration and/or to localize said vibration to assembly **400**, one or more elements of assembly **400** may include any suitable damping material or combination of materials. Such damping material may be applied, for example, to one or more elements of assembly **400** coupled together (e.g., guide **408** and follower **410**). In some embodiments, damping material may be applied between structure **402** and the body of the input device.

Trigger **404** and trigger actuator **406** are configured to rotate until reaching an end position. It will be understood that the term “end position” as used herein refers to the limiting position of the trigger assembly under an external force. FIG. 4B shows the assembly **400** of FIG. 4A at an end position. As shown, the end position is defined via the interaction between an edge of guide **408** and follower **410**. In other embodiments however, the end position may be defined via any one or more interactions between elements of assembly **400**. For example, the end position may be defined by the maximum compression of trigger spring **416**. In some embodiments, one or more edges of trigger **404** may interact with (e.g., strike) structure **402**. In other embodiments, tab **420** may interact with guide **422** and/or structure **402**.

As mentioned above, vibrator **426** may be couple to one or more elements of assembly **400** in any orientation and via any suitable mechanism. FIGS. 5A-E show various example attachment configurations of a trigger vibrator in accordance with different embodiments of the present disclosure.

FIG. 5A shows a vibrator **500** coupled to a trigger actuator **502** and oriented substantially tangentially to actuator axis

504. Although vibrator **500** is illustrated as being coupled to actuator **502** via a single mounting **506** (as opposed to two mountings **428** in FIG. 4A), it will be understood that vibrator **500**, as discussed above, may be coupled to actuator **502** via any suitable mechanism.

FIG. 5B shows vibrator **510** coupled to trigger actuator **512** and oriented substantially parallel to actuator axis **514**.

FIG. 5C-F shows vibrators **520**, **530**, **540**, and **550** coupled respectively to triggers **522**, **532**, **542**, and **552**. It will be understood that triggers **522**, **532**, **542**, and **552** may be substantially hollow such that vibrators **520**, **530**, **540**, and **550** may be oriented, in whole or in part, in an interior of the respective trigger. Vibrators **520**, **530**, **540**, and **550** may be oriented within triggers **522**, **532**, **542**, and **552** in order to save space and/or to provide a more localized vibration to said triggers.

FIG. 5C shows vibrator **520** coupled to trigger **522** and oriented substantially tangentially to trigger axis **524**.

FIG. 5D shows vibrator **530** coupled to trigger **532** and oriented substantially parallel to trigger axis **534**.

FIG. 5E shows vibrator **540** coupled to trigger **542** and oriented substantially radially to trigger axis **544**.

FIG. 5F shows a vibrator **550** couple to trigger **552** and oriented substantially radially to trigger axis **546**. In contrast to the configuration of FIG. 5E, vibrator **550** is positioned such that eccentric mass **556** (e.g., mass **306** of FIG. 3A) is oriented towards the trigger surface of trigger **552**.

The invention claimed is:

1. An input device comprising:

a communication subsystem configured to provide bidirectional communication with a computing device;

a force feedback trigger assembly, including:

a user-actuatable trigger configured to pivot about a trigger axis responsive to an applied external force; and

an encoder communicatively coupled to the communication subsystem and configured to send a pull parameter of the user-actuatable trigger to the computing device via the communication subsystem; and

a trigger vibrator directly coupled to the force feedback trigger assembly and communicatively coupled to the communication subsystem, the trigger vibrator configured to vibrate the user-actuatable trigger responsive to a vibration signal received from the computing device via the communication subsystem.

2. The input device of claim 1, wherein the trigger vibrator includes a rotary motor configured to rotate an eccentric mass about a mass axis.

3. The input device of claim 2, wherein the trigger vibrator is directly coupled to the user-actuatable trigger.

4. The input device of claim 3, wherein the mass axis is oriented substantially radially from the trigger axis.

5. The input device of claim 3, wherein the mass axis is oriented substantially tangentially to the trigger axis.

6. The input device of claim 3, wherein the mass axis is oriented substantially parallel to the trigger axis.

7. The input device of claim 3, wherein the trigger is substantially hollow, and wherein the trigger vibrator is coupled to an interior of the trigger.

8. The input device of claim 2, wherein the force feedback trigger assembly further includes a trigger actuator directly coupled between the user-actuatable trigger and the encoder, the trigger actuator being configured to pivot about a actuator axis, and the trigger actuator being further configured to translate pivoting of the user-actuatable trigger to the encoder, and wherein the trigger vibrator is directly coupled to the trigger actuator.

- 9. The input device of claim 8, wherein the mass axis is oriented substantially radially from the actuator axis.
- 10. The input device of claim 8, wherein the mass axis is oriented substantially tangentially to the actuator axis.
- 11. The input device of claim 8, wherein the mass axis is oriented substantially parallel to the actuator axis.
- 12. An input device comprising:
 - a communication subsystem configured to provide bidirectional communication with a computing device;
 - a force feedback trigger assembly, including:
 - a user-actuatable trigger configured to pivot about a trigger axis responsive to an applied external force; and
 - an encoder communicatively coupled to the communication subsystem and configured to send a pull parameter of the user-actuatable trigger to the computing device via the communication subsystem; and
 - a rotary motor directly coupled to the force feedback trigger assembly and communicatively coupled to the communication subsystem, the rotary motor configured to rotate an eccentric mass that vibrates the user-actuatable trigger responsive to a vibration signal received from the computing device via the communication subsystem.
- 13. An input device comprising:
 - a communication subsystem configured to provide bidirectional communication with a computing device;
 - a hollow body;
 - a body vibrator coupled to an interior of the hollow body and configured to vibrate the hollow body in response to a body vibration signal received from the communication subsystem;
 - a force feedback trigger assembly coupled to an interior of the hollow body, the force feedback trigger assembly including:
 - a user-actuatable trigger configured to pivot about a trigger axis responsive to an applied external force; and
 - an encoder communicatively coupled to the communication subsystem and configured to send a pull parameter of the user-actuatable trigger to the computing device via the communication subsystem;
 - a trigger vibrator directly coupled to the force feedback trigger assembly and communicatively coupled to the communication subsystem, the trigger vibrator config-

- ured to vibrate the user-actuatable trigger responsive to a trigger vibration signal received from the computing device via the communication subsystem.
- 14. The input device of claim 13, wherein the trigger vibrator includes a rotary motor configured to rotate an eccentric mass about a mass axis.
- 15. The input device of claim 14, wherein the trigger vibrator is directly coupled to the user-actuatable trigger.
- 16. The input device of claim 15, wherein the mass axis is oriented substantially radially from the trigger axis.
- 17. The input device of claim 15, wherein the trigger is substantially hollow, and wherein the trigger vibrator is coupled to an interior of the trigger.
- 18. The input device of claim 14, wherein the force feedback trigger assembly further includes a trigger actuator directly coupled between the user-actuatable trigger and the encoder, the trigger actuator being configured to pivot about a actuator axis, and the trigger actuator being further configured to translate pivoting of the user-actuatable trigger to the encoder, and wherein the trigger vibrator is directly coupled to the trigger actuator.
- 19. The input device of claim 18, wherein the mass axis is oriented substantially radially from the actuator axis.
- 20. The input device of claim 18, wherein the mass axis is oriented substantially tangentially to the actuator axis.
- 21. An input device comprising:
 - a communication subsystem configured to provide bidirectional communication with a computing device;
 - a force feedback trigger assembly, including:
 - a user-actuatable trigger; and
 - an encoder communicatively coupled to the communication subsystem and configured to send a pull parameter of the user-actuatable trigger to the computing device via the communication subsystem; and
 - a trigger vibrator directly coupled to the force feedback trigger assembly and communicatively coupled to the communication subsystem, the trigger vibrator configured to vibrate the user-actuatable trigger responsive to a vibration signal received from the computing device via the communication subsystem.
- 22. The input device of claim 21, wherein the user-actuatable trigger is coupled to a spring.

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